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AUTHOR Gormley, Kathleen A.; McDermott, Peter C.
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ABSTRACT

This 3-year study examined how primary grade teachers and their teacher assistants taught reading and the language arts to a boy with multiple disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Qualitative research strategies are used to describe and explain the boy's participation in literacy activities from kindergarten through second grade. Findings are presented chronologically by the boy's grade placements, from kindergarten through second grade. Analyses revealed the following: (1) inclusion is a learning opportunity that enables teachers to improve their understanding of teaching and learning; (2) inclusion sensitized teachers to the needs of children in their classrooms; (3) other children benefited from the boy's inclusion in their classrooms because they learned to accept academic and physical differences as part of everyday life; (4) special children can be as socially and academically isolated in a regular classroom as they are when in separate facilities or programs, as not all regular classroom teachers willingly assume academic and social responsibility for special needs children in their rooms; (5) teacher assistants had a tremendous influence on the success of the boy's inclusion by accelerating or impeding his progress; and (6) successful inclusion requires teachers to creatively plan learning activities for disabled children that parallel the literacy task demands of other children. (Author/JDD)

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Modifying Primary Grade Classrooms for Inclusion: Darrell's 3 Years of Experience

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Kathleen A. Gormley, Ed.D
Peter C. McDermott, Ed.D.

The Sage Colleges
Troy, New York 12180

EC 303188

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Abstract

In this three year study, we examined how primary grade teachers and their teacher assistants taught reading and the language arts to a multiply-disabled boy in inclusion classrooms. Using qualitative research strategies we describe and explain Darrell's participation in literacy activities from kindergarten through second grade. Our analyses revealed the following: 1) Inclusion is a learning opportunity enabling teachers to improve their understanding of teaching and learning. 2) Inclusion sensitized teachers to the needs of children in their classrooms. 3) Other children benefited from Darrell's inclusion in their classrooms because they learned to accept academic and physical differences as part of everyday life. 4) Teacher assistants had a tremendous influence on the success of Darrell's inclusion by both accelerating or impeding his progress. 5) Successful inclusion requires teachers to creatively plan learning activities for disabled children that parallel the literacy task demands of other children.

Introduction

Darrell lived the first three years of his life in city hospitals, only leaving their confines twice before the day he was adopted. Remarkably, and despite many illnesses indicating otherwise, his adoptive parent believed that his health difficulties and his intellectual and language delays would be manageable and surmounted in time. In a short period her beliefs and relentless efforts showed signs of being realized - within a month his new family weaned him from pureed foods and bottles, taught him to eat table foods and toilet trained him. His underdeveloped motor skills gained strength and his oral language slowly emerged. His parent placed him in day care and later into a regular preschool program. However, when it was time for him to begin the primary grades, his admission into a regular education program proved troublesome because of all the obstacles that educational institutions use to segregate children with disabilities from mainstream schooling. In this paper we chronicle Darrell's inclusion experiences from kindergarten thru second grade.

If the actions of the city's social service agency had proceeded in their normal ways, Darrell, as many other children like him, would have remained institutionalized until his health improved. It would be highly unlikely that a child with his many disabilities would ever be adopted, much less survive his illnesses. Children with serious long term health problems, physical impairments, delayed language and presumed intellectual handicaps, are more likely to spend their childhood moving from one residential institution and foster care placement to another until they reach adulthood. Equally improbable would be placement of a child like Darrell into a regular school program known for its integrated and holistic approaches to classroom teaching and learning. In this paper we present our findings from a three year classroom research project of Darrell, a multiply disabled boy, who was unusually fortunate to be adopted and receive a regular primary grade education.

Currently there are tremendous special education reforms to include disabled children into regular education classrooms (e.g., Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Lipsky & Gartner, 1989; Stainback, J. & Stainback, S., 1992). For too many years, schools removed disabled children from regular education and placed them in separate programs apart from other children. Typically, disabled children were

mainstreamed into regular classrooms for ancillary activities such as lunch or gym. More often than not, for children with more severe disabilities, instruction would take place away from their local school. These segregated programs have produced devastating effects upon the self-concept and achievement of disabled children, and they have fostered distorted and negative perceptions about special children in the minds of the general public, regular classroom teachers and their students.

The present change to an inclusion model of special services means that all children, regardless of their disabilities, will attend their local schools and attend regular classes with children of their age (Frazer, 1994). Classroom teachers are responsible, with the help of consultant teachers and classroom aides and assistants, to modify their instruction and curriculum to meet the needs of handicapped children. Although inclusion might initially frighten some classroom teachers due to their lack of experience or knowledge, many more elementary teachers are successfully including special children into their classrooms.

Purpose of Study

In this paper we examine how one multiply disabled primary grade child, Darrell, is included into three regular education classrooms during his kindergarten, first and second grade school years. The purpose of this study was to describe and explain how Darrell's teachers modified their teaching to include him in their primary grade classrooms. Specifically, the study examined the following questions:

1) How did primary grade teachers modify their classroom instruction and interaction to accommodate a child with multiple disabilities?

2) How did special teacher assistants assigned to the disabled child support classroom teachers and the special child's learning needs?

3) What patterns of social interaction appeared in Darrell's primary grade classrooms that fostered and/or impeded his successful inclusion?

Method

We conducted this study over three school years, from the time Darrell entered kindergarten to the end of second grade. Using non-participant observation, one researcher extensively observed Darrell

during his reading and language arts periods in all three of the classrooms. The second researcher functioned as an impartial and outside reader of the classroom observer's records and analyses. We selected literacy events because they provided a common instructional context to compare and contrast each of Darrell's inclusion classrooms.

The observer prepared field notes for each of the twenty classroom visits. These notes were organized in three ways: (1) The first type of journal entry consisted of behavioral observations of what teachers and children did or said in the classroom; (2) methodological notes in which the observer recorded ideas about what to describe or who to interview during future school visits; (3) reflective entries pertaining to the observer's thoughts about Darrell's placement in school. These three categories of field notes offered a systematic way to later retrieve and examine the researcher's direct observations, ideas and perceptions about Darrell's inclusion experiences.

Each of the observational visits lasted at least one hour and took place during the morning routines, which included reading and languages arts activities. After each visit the observer rewrote the journal entries by filling-in incomplete ideas and adding information to descriptions that were only outlined when observing in the classroom. In addition to the field notes, the observer conducted interviews with the classroom teachers and teacher assistants. Writing samples and other school records of Darrell's placement were also in these grades. Several videotapes of Darrell during kindergarten and second grade as well as during his participation in an after-school reading program served as permanent and retrievable records of these educational contexts.

We analyzed this data using the "constant comparative" method described by Glazer and Strauss (1967) and looked for recurring patterns of interaction in our descriptive data. We then compared and contrasted each of the perceived recurring interactional patterns between and across the three grade levels. The second researcher served as an outside reader (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and critic of the observer's analyses. The outside reader provided greater validity and insight to the study's findings than would have been obtained if analyses were only tested and questioned by the single classroom researcher.

The Augusta Treadwell School

The Augusta Treadwell School (ATS) is located high up on a hill above an old Northeastern riverfront city. The ATS was founded over 100 years ago by the spouse of a wealthy industrialist. It is nationally known for its fine secondary education of young women, and many families throughout the country send their offspring to board at the school. The Elementary School is part of the Augusta Treadwell School and is located on the same grounds across the running track from the main campus . The Elementary School, however, is considered by ATS administrators as ancillary to the secondary program, and it has not received the public recognition that the secondary school has enjoyed over the years.

Most area residents have never seen the campus because its perimeter is walled. Access is limited to two entry points and it is out of the way from the city center. Interaction between the school and the city is not fostered. Moreover, tuition to ATS secondary is extremely high and the cost to attend The Elementary School is affordable only to middle and upper income families. To its credit the Elementary School offers some scholarship money for local children and during Darrell's enrollment there were several children attending from a downtown low-income housing project.

Sweeping driveways curve among tall maple and pine trees as one enters the campus of the ATS. Grey granite buildings, clearly designed to reflect permanence and dignified architecture form the main campus of the upper school. The grounds consist of sprawling, beautifully groomed lawns, flowers and shrubbery.

The Elementary School presents a softer tone with two large wood frame buildings originally built by wealthy industrialists in the city. Entrance to the buildings reveals high chandeliered ceilings and spiral staircases with rich dark wood paneling. The classrooms are located throughout these mansion buildings. Darrell's kindergarten is on the second floor of the first building. His teacher refers to her class as the "upstairs kindergarten," distinguishing it from the other kindergarten class on the first floor. Darrell's first and second grade classrooms are in the other building which is higher up the hill and just across from the gymnasium which is shared by the secondary and elementary schools.

Darrell's single parent, an educator, chose the Elementary School for Darrell and then advocated through the CSE process that the City School District place him there. The Elementary School was known throughout the area as being progressive and child-centered. In addition, the director of the Elementary School supported inclusion and welcomed children who differed from others in their learning needs and physical abilities. At the time Darrell began kindergarten, the city's special education programs offered segregated programming for children with multiple disabilities. These programs left little room for choice for a parent who was committed to a regular education for her son. Consequently, The Elementary School was particularly attractive because of the director's willingness to foster inclusion, the school's reputation for excellence and its proximity to Darrell's home.

Class size and curriculum were other reasons that made the Elementary School attractive to Darrell's mother and other parents as well. All of the primary grade classrooms contained less than 15 children. Teacher aides worked in each class and the school had two special reading teachers who worked with all students and provided personal attention to children with difficulty learning. The teachers did not use basal reading programs but adopted a literature based language arts curriculum. Teachers integrated reading and writing instruction with children's literature in all grades, and each teacher incorporated the arts, drama, and music on a daily basis. In fact, several of Darrell's teachers played musical instruments and often used classroom pianos or their guitars during morning activities, special projects as well as presentations for other classrooms or parents.

Perhaps a similar classroom, with corresponding teaching philosophies and methods, might be found in a building within the local public school district. The district has many fine teachers throughout their elementary schools. It would be unlikely that any of the elementary schools in the district could provide a consistent model of teaching and learning like the Elementary School did. In most large urban school districts the model and quality of teaching varies considerably from one classroom to the next, and class size in Darrell's school district, typically as high as 25 in the primary grades, was decidedly larger than the Elementary School permitted. Additionally, at the time of his kindergarten placement, it was simply out of the question as to whether Darrell would be allowed to attend a regular class in a public school because

the district only offered separate programming for children with disabilities like his.

Results

Our findings are presented chronologically by Darrell's grade placements. We first describe and explain our observations of Darrell in kindergarten. Next we discuss his experiences in first and second grades. We summarize our observations and share our interpretations about the degree of success of his inclusion in each grade. Each of the descriptions is provided to answer the study's questions pertaining to how teachers modified their instruction and interaction with children who have disabilities, and how teacher assistants supported classroom teachers and children with disabilities in inclusion classrooms.

The Kindergarten Year

Darrell's kindergarten teacher's model of teaching accomodated all children's literacy needs, which ranged from beginning emergent reading to precocious conventional readers. All the children received personalized instruction. The kindergarten teacher modified her interaction with Darrell by providing him with more social support (i.e., frequent physical proximity and gentle touch from her) . Although she used touch with all of the kindergarten children, Darrell simply received more of this communication strategy. The teacher assistant's interactions with Darrell were indistinguishable from her interactions with other children in the room. The real effects of the assistant's presence was to reduce adult-to-child ratio in the classroom and physically help Darrell move between campus buildings.

A Typical day - silent reading and morning lesson

On a sunny winter morning, Darrell sat on the green rug with Evelyn as they read silently from illustrated children's books which Sophia, their kindergarten teacher, had placed throughout the room. Beams of sunlight crossed the room from its many large paneled windows. The bright colors of children's clothing and displays of their art projects offered a colorful and cheerful room for the children and teacher. It was 10:45 and the "upstairs kindergarten" had begun its sustained silent reading. Of course, only a few of the kindergartners read conventionally. Most of the children were emerging readers who "read" books by using the illustrations and perhaps a few read beginning letters to make sense of what they saw. Yet all of the children, including Darrell, self-selected their books to read for this short period of time,

typically five to ten minutes.

All thirteen children silently read while sitting on the rug. Although it was "silent reading" time, the children's voices could be clearly heard as they softly whispered the stories to themselves. Their teacher, Sophia, directed several children to "spread out" so other children could walk by to select and return books to the shelves. Without getting up, Darrell slid himself out of the way, laughing aloud and then resuming his silent reading alongside Evelyn . Sophia sat across the room on the rug and modeled silent reading for the children. Within a few moments Darrell tapped Evelyn on the shoulder and pointed to an illustration in his book that he wanted her to see. Evelyn nodded her head approvingly, although only slightly interested, and resumed reading her own book. Darrell persisted in his attempt to gain Evelyn's attention and again tapped her on her shoulder. He laughed aloud at the illustration on his lap. At that very moment Sophia softly sang, "If you are wearing green, please put your book away." She then continued and sang a different verse that moved more quickly, " I had a dog and his name was Rags...flip, flop, wig, wag, sig, sag..."

As Sophia sang, the children returned their books to the shelf and moved over to where she sat. All the children were now sitting in a semi-circle in front of her rocking chair and easel. Darrell positioned himself next to her feet, almost sitting on her shoes. Sophia began her lesson by directing the children's attention to the chart paper where she had printed "Bears" in the center. On the left hand side of the paper was a column of words describing bears which the children brainstormed the previous day. As Sophia and the children discussed yesterday's ideas she explained to them she wanted to share more about bears.

During this morning discussion, Darrell played quietly with Sophia's shoe laces. He tied and untied them, but initially Sophia ignored his fidgeting. But after a few minutes she stopped her lesson, leaned over and physically repositioned him away from her shoes. Sophia returned to her lesson and Darrell leaned backward and laid face-up on the floor.

Although most of the other children were attentive, there were a few, who like Darrell, seemed distracted and unengaged during Sophia's discussion about bears. Two other boys, for example, leaned

over onto the rug and were laid flat on their stomachs, concentrating on a piece of tape used to hold the rug on the floor. Another boy crawled from one spot on the rug to another picking up fuzz balls. Within a minute or so, Sophia stopped her lesson again and verbally directed the boys to watch her. Later she reacted to another child who was also inattentive, "Natalie, I'm waiting for you to be ready."

Darrell's behaviors blended well with the other children's. Sophia did not need to attend to Darrell any more than any of his peers. Managing Darrell did not require a unique knowledge base. Although she allowed him more touch and physical closeness, this did not interrupt the flow of her lessons, nor did she need to modify her instruction to accommodate his developmental differences.

Next Sophia placed an illustrated book , Dinosaurs by Aliki,on her lap. Darrell immediately became more attentive and closely watched as Sophia discussed the cover illustration with the class. He knelt and placed his hand on her knee, watching intently as she read. Two other boys who had been off task earlier, resumed their fidgeting, but Darrell riveted his eyes to Sophia and the book. Darrell loved books and easily lost himself in story reading activities. After reading the book Sophia asked the children, "Who can tell me what they remember?" Several children raised their hands and contributed ideas. While the discussion ensued, Darrell touched Evelyn's arm, and then he resumed his play with Sophia' shoes. Eventually Sophia asked Evelyn to move back from Darrell. But when Evelyn changed her place, Darrell inched backwards to her. Finally Sophia leaned over and touched him as a signal to stay exactly where he was. Darrell often became distracted during classroom discussions but his attention always became fixed during story reading.

Sophia resumed her discussion about dinosaurs and pointed to the chart paper where she had printed Tyrannosaurus Rex. She printed a number of questions about Tyrannosaurus' eating habits, its number of legs and special characteristics. Sophia asked the children these questions and wrote their answers onto the chart paper with red felt pen.

Twenty minutes had passed since the dinosaur lesson began. Finally Sophia ended her lesson by saying, "All right, stand up and make a circle. Guess where we are going?" The children shouted, "Dinosaur Hunt!" One boy, Brent, appeared off-task, but Sophia intervened by looking directly at him

and saying, "Your choice is to listen or leave." Brent settled down and joined the other children.

The children spread out into a full circle and sat down. Sophia began by singing, "Going on a dinosaur hunt." Children clapped their hands rhythmically and patted their legs as they sang with Sophia. Darrell again sat alongside Sophia. He laughed, smiled and clapped his hands in unison with the other children. Periodically he touched Evelyn's arm, almost as reassurance that his friend was again sitting with him.

Sophia usually ended her story reading and discussion time with movement activities which served as good transitions between lessons. After the movement activity Sophia began writing and art activities that would be completed in the front room. During her chick unit, for example, Sophia told the children that they would write and draw chicks during their writing time. She displayed a "tracer" egg for those children who were unable to draw eggs independently and explained that she wanted everyone to write about the "tenth day" of chick incubation. After they had composed their ideas, they were to illustrate and color the page. Sophia dismissed children to the front room in an orderly way by calling the colors of clothing they wore.

When Darrell acted uncooperatively

Once during these observations Darrell refused to cooperate with Sophia's directions. It happened in the large work room where there were three rectangular tables and benches about six feet in length. The children sat on the benches to write, draw and complete art projects. On one side of the room was a large rabbit cage where the class pet, "Spots", lived. On this day, as on others, Darrell sat alongside of Evelyn and began writing inventively in his chick journal. But Sophia came over to him and said, "Darrell, you need to sit next to TJ, but not Evelyn. You need to get your work done." Evidently, Sophia believed Darrell would play and not work if he is sat with Evelyn, and that was the reason why she asked him to move (this, in fact, became a recurring issue throughout Darrell kindergarten and first grade years). But her management strategy backfired because after Darrell moved to the middle table, next to TJ, he silently sulked. Sophia then walked over and sat next to him and said, "You need to get your work done," but Darrell didn't respond. He just sat passively with his head down on the table, fidgeting with a

large pencil that he held in his hands.

"Darrell, you need to open your journal, " Sophia softly said again as she tried to redirect him to work. Sophia attempted to encourage him by opening his chick journal herself and asked, "What do you want to write?" But he did not respond. She then asked if he could find the number ten to copy - Darrell whispered, "I don't want to write!" Sophia wrapped her arm around his shoulders and hugged him reassuringly. As she talked with him other children waited in line for help from her with their writing. Sophia told one of the children that she would be there in a moment. She left Darrell and moved from one child to the next, as she held individual writing conferences.

Sophia frequently used touch to communicate with the children. She used it, whether it be a huge bear hug or a gentle rubbing of a child's shoulders, to convey her care for them. In fact, it was only a few moments after hugging Darrell that Sophia rubbed the arms of another child and said, "This is the best work you have done so far. Good job!"

After conferencing with the other chidlren, Sophia again sat alongside of Darrell. This time he was a little more responsive and wrote on the bottom of one of the pages of his chick journal. Sophia asked him what he had written. Although Darrell had not yet learned to write all the letters of the alphabet, he knew the letter "D" from his name, and it often appeared in his writing. Sophia often transcribed his ideas after he had scribbled them onto his paper. Darrell softly whispered his ideas into her ear, and she printed his oral text above his inventive scribbling. Other children had gathered around Sophia and watched what she wrote for him. Sophia told Darrell that he could draw his picture. Darrell took his egg tracer and began outlining with it. After he finished with the outline he colored it with his crayons.

Sophia's interactions with Darrell, even during the rare times he was uncooperative, did not require extraordinary management or behavioral strategies. The knowledge she used to manage other children worked perfectly well with Darrell. Although she might have spent more time explaining behavioral expectations to him, her interactions were indistinguishable from the manner in which she handled other children who acted similarly.

Darrell's teacher assistant

The City School District assigned a half-day teacher assistant for Darrell. This aide, Melina, functioned as a classroom assistant and evenly divided her attention among the children in the room. Typically, while Sophia conducted her lessons, Melina quietly sat with the children and if any of the children become distracted or needed assistance, she helped them. Melina's presence allowed fewer distractions and interruptions for Sophia. Sometimes Melina and Sophia switched roles and Sophia would sit on the floor with the children as Melina conducted a lesson.

One day Melina presented a cultural lesson about Greece, the country of her family's heritage. The children sat in their regular places on the rug and Melina positioned herself in Sophia's spot next to the easel. Darrell sat in the same location on the rug as he ordinarily did, almost on top of the teacher's shoes. Melina shared many photographs, pottery and Greek dolls with the children. After she explained the cultural meaning of each of the items, she let children handle them. Because Darrell sat directly in front of her, he was the first to hold each item. After a moment or two with each picture or doll, he gently handed them to the other children near him. Next Melina said, "Today, I am going to teach you a Greek dance!" She directed the children to stand and form a circle. Then she modeled how to perform the "circle dance." "One over, two over, three over, kick!, kick!" Melina sang as she played the cassette player containing Greek music, and all the children held hands and danced. Melina orchestrated their foot movements, and they laughed and danced in a circle. Darrell received the first turn to hold the handkerchief that is held by the leader of the open-ended "circle dance." He twirled it in a wide circular motion in the air. Darrell giggled and laughed even harder when he suddenly found himself inside of the circle instead of on its perimeter. Evelyn came next and all the children received turns at waving the handkerchief and leading the "circle dance."

At about 11:45 each day all the children cleaned up their tables and placed their folders in their work-cubbies. As they did, Sophia supervised and picked up scattered paper and crayons that had fallen to the floor. Darrell would join the other children as they waited in line next to the classroom door for lunch. Darrell participated in all the lunch and recess activities.

Summary of kindergarten

Darrell's kindergarten experiences were very positive because the curriculum, the adults' teaching styles and methods of managing children allowed for a wide range of developmental differences. Sophia and Melina did not interact much differently with Darrell than they did with other children. The primary effect of having Melina as a half-time teacher assistant was to form a smaller student to teacher ratio. The curriculum did not require modification because it already allowed for individual differences in children's literacy development. Because Sophia expected a wide continuum of literacy abilities among her children, her methods for whole class and individual learning activities did not dictate any change to accomodate Darrell's literacy learning needs.

First Grade

First grade proved to be less than satisfactory for Darrell as well as the other children. As would be expected, the first grade teacher held different expectations for them than their kindergarten teacher. But for Darrell, the teacher's actions also suggested that his learning needs were not her responsibility. Additionally, the first grade teacher assistant, who was assigned to Darrell, interacted in ways that for all extensive purposes segregated him from the other children.

To be candid, there was even more to be said about Darrell's first grade year. In general the year was inferior in quality to kindergarten in meeting all the children's academic and social needs. Although skilled in many instructional areas, the first grade teacher did not project the comfortable and warm style of interaction with children that other teachers at ATS displayed. She was especially strong in math but lacked the understanding of how to apply theories about language and literacy learning into her classroom teaching. Specifically, her classroom did not present the same print and language-rich learning environments as the other classrooms in the school. She assumed a hands-off policy for Darrell's learning needs and gave all responsibility for his instruction to his teacher aide who was certified in special education. By spring it became known by all faculty her teaching contract would not be renewed for the next academic year.

The two first grades were located in the basement of the upper school building where they shared two large rooms: the cubby/coat room where children's winter clothing was hung and the art room consisting of sinks and long rectangular tables for painting and other messy projects. In addition his class also had its own classroom containing individual desks, a chalkboard and a rug where reading groups met. Although the colors of the basement conveyed a warm tone, the rooms lacked the natural lighting and brightness of the other classrooms in the school.

The meeting room was located in the farthest corner of the basement. It was carpeted and contained large pillows for sitting, chalk and bulletin boards, and a teacher's easel. This was the room where Darrell's teacher conducted morning meetings, warmups and informed children of what they would do each day.

Social interaction during morning meetings

Morning meeting provided a good time to sample interaction among classroom members. These meetings conveyed the social atmosphere and relationships which crossed into other parts of the school day. Dorothy, Darrell's first grade teacher, possessed a good singing voice and a wonderful ability to play a guitar. Quite often she would begin theday by singing several verses of "I love the mountains" with the children.

When the children sat on the rug for morning meeting, Anne, Darrell's new assistant, typically sat directly behind him to closely monitor his behaviors. If his behaviors seemed off-task to her, she tapped his shoulder, whispered in his ear or even physically repositioned him to fit the desired behavior. In a figurative sense, Anne "shadowed" Darrell wherever he went, but this "shadowing" restricted his movements and interactions with other children. During morning meetings Anne might physically place Darrell on her lap as Dorothy conducted the session. No other children were ever treated this way by Anne or Dorothy.

Mathematics which was one of Dorothy's strengths in teaching, obtained great prominence in morning meetings. However, because of all the attention allocated to math, literacy was in effect short-changed. Morning meeting was not used as a time to share books or highlight literacy in any way. This

became particularly problematic for Darrell, a lover of stories, who did not understand the math concepts Dorothy presented.

It may have been because of his undeveloped math ability that the adults believed that Darrell required close scrutiny during morning meeting time. Dorothy would often lead children in discussion about number sequence and counting, sometimes even playing games with numbers. Often she directed children in number songs in which integers became successively higher with each verse. All the children, including Darrell, laughed and sang these number songs.

During one morning meeting in which children sang number songs, Darrell touched Melissa who sat next to him. Anne physically moved him away from her. Dorothy then asked Darrell what number came after "24"? He answered uncertainly by saying "30", which was technically correct. Dorothy cued him by saying "23, 25, or 26?" Darrell correctly answered "26", although it was likely to be a guess because he was only a novice with number concepts at that time. Next Dorothy pointed to the class calendar and moved several of the calendar pieces. Dorothy clapped her hands and snapped her fingers, and all the children counted by 2's and then by 5's. Darrell mimicked the children in their counting, repeating each of the numbers slightly after they did.

Dorothy offered Darrell many opportunities to participate in the math activities of morning meeting. For instance, one day Dorothy asked Darrell, "5 + 1 = ?," but Darrell guessed incorrectly. She then helped him by having him count wooden dowels she handed him. Darrell stood and counted the dowels. Although he appeared very unsure about what he was doing, he provided the correct answer. Dorothy said, "Thank you Darrell, you may sit back on the mat "Indian style." Darrell returned to the rug, and Anne physically picked him up and placed him on her lap. When she did this she kind of cradled him "protectively " with her arms.

Darrell's "silly" behaviors

During the school year Darrell became somewhat of a class clown. His "silly" behaviors, as other children would eventually call them , might have been a way for him to disguise his lack of understanding of the math concepts which consumed so much of the class day. These silly behaviors became

behavioral patterns that remerged in successive years in school.

During one morning meeting, which was particularly illustrative of his emerging "silly" behaviors, Darrell sat at Dorothy's feet as she sat in a chair. All the children, except Darrell, counted numbers by 10 in unison. When Dorothy said, "Let's all count by two's," all the children, again except Darrell, chorally recited their two's. Seeing Darrell's passiveness, Anne moved him to her lap. Darrell then waved his hands as if conducting an orchestra, moving his hands up and down rhythmically with the count until Anne physically stopped him. This incident and others like it suggested that Darrell learned to adapt to his first grade social context by using humor to entertain and distract others from his difficulty in learning what they were doing.

A restricted social context

Social interaction in first grade was much more restricted than in Darrell's kindergarten classroom. Dorothy and Anne interacted in more businesslike ways than the warm and friendly style of Sophia and Melina. The social distance Dorothy maintained from Darrell was revealed most clearly when it was discovered that he didn't even know her name until spring. Furthermore, Dorothy and Anne monitored the first grade children far more closely than Sophia ever did. Their interactions with Darrell, as well as any of the other children, left little room for them to physically or mentally stray from what adults desired. One incident illustrates their close supervision very clearly: One fall morning before the beginning of the school day Darrell and several of his classmates played on the classroom floor with board and computer games while a few children composed in their journals. Darrell sat alongside Amanda and playfully touched her with a plastic hatchet; he moved it up and down in the air, gently touching her shoulder with each downward stroke. Before Amanda said anything Anne walked from the corner where she had been watching Darrell, and told him to stop.

Dorothy and Anne's close attention to Darrell's behavior was consistently evident. During one morning's writing time, for example, Darrell composed in his journal with a crayon, but Anne seemed dissatisfied, stopped him from writing and directed him to put the crayon away and use a marker instead. When other children moved independently and freely from room to room, Anne often escorted Darrell to

whatever room the group moved into. Darrell gave few signs of displeasure to this attention, but this mode of interaction fostered dependence upon the assistant. Her management style minimized his ability to negotiate his own interactions with children and learn independent social skills. Although there were occasions when Anne also assisted other children, far more often than not she focused her attention on Darrell.

Instruction during reading and language arts

Although Darrell improved in his literacy abilities during kindergarten and first grade, his peers' literacy achievements, particularly in oral reading and writing, became more visible than his. Darrell's literacy growth at this time was more conceptual and not necessarily evidenced in everyday reading and writing without close scrutiny. Darrell had learned directionality in reading, he knew some letters and his scribbling conveyed the conventions of top-down and left to right progression. Additionally, letter-like forms appeared in his scribbling.

Reading and language arts began each day following morning meeting. One morning was representative of others and took place in the following way: At about 9:40 Dorothy ended morning meeting by saying, "Ok, now we'll do language arts." All the children moved to the classroom, and Anne escorted Darrell. However, this particular day Darrell disagreed about which of his journals he was to write, but Anne asserted herself to make certain he wrote in the journal she wanted. The children talked softly as they composed in their journals. Darrell spoke with the children adjacent to him, interacting more with the girls than with the boys. As he wrote (actually scribbling with letter like-forms and a few letters), he said, "GI Joe!" Darrell then took some colored pencils from a can on one of the desks . Anne told him not to use the crayons, just markers. Darrell stood at his desk, with his hands on his head and appeared to be thinking. Anne moved over to him, sat down, and helped him with his writing. As Darrell dictated his story Anne wrote what he said. She said , "What letter does that begin with ?" Darrell replied, "P." When Anne left, Darrell resumed taking markers from the can and wrote in his journal. Periodically, he looked at the other children, particularly the girl sitting next to him. She read aloud to him from her journal and he responded, " Are you making a picture of it?"

Anne, who had now returned to Darrell's desk, began writing the day's date on his journal entry. "What are you writing?" asked Darrell. Anne replied, "June 1, 1992." Darrell resumed his drawing of GI Joe. He drew and scribbled and sometimes a letter could be seen in his writing. Meanwhile the other children in the room individually shared their writing with Melina, who the school hired this year as a reading teacher. Sometimes she called them in pairs to the rug where they read their entries aloud. Throughout journal writing Darrell remained very task oriented and continued to write with his markers. Once he commented to the boy at his table, "Like it, Billy?" But Billy reacted slowly and appeared disinterested in what Darrell asked. Darrell then changed the topic of discussion to Billy's hair. Darrell hit his own head with the book and laughed, trying relentlessly to attract Billy's attention. Darrell laughed aloud. Melina, who was interacting with children at another table, appeared amused, smiled slightly and commented, "Is everyone working OK?" Darrell immediately became quiet.

Darrell often gave the appearance of being a very busy student and actually most of the time, this was true. His busyness was evident this day in taking a marker from the can, drawing a bit, putting the marker back into the can and then taking out another. He displayed the appearance of a student being consumed with his work. Occasionally he commented to other children at his table, although they didn't always reply.

Darrell usually initiated most of the talk at his table. Even though Darrell's literacy development was now visibly different from the other children's, his task involvement on that day appeared no different than his peers. However, this was not always true because Darrell could be very deliberate and skillful in going off-task; sometimes adults would not realize that one of his simple conversational asides could distract them from several minutes of instruction. Darrell tended to be sick from school more than the other children, with eye, ear and throat viruses. His teachers believed he displayed "pre-symptoms" to these viruses with fatigue and lack of concentration several days before he actually was absent.

In the first half of the year Dorothy used small heterogeneous ability groups to conduct reading lessons. But by mid-year it was obvious to Dorothy that the class had not come together as expected. Consequently, she changed her reading methods to individualized reading instruction. In the late winter

and spring Anne pulled Darrell out of the classroom and tutored him on letter skills, sentence strips and oral reading of easy children's books. She often had Darrell write in shaving cream and sand to develop his knowledge of the distinctive features of letters.

Like all other teachers in the school, Dorothy used children's literature to teach reading. Although she allowed inventive spelling, she seemed uncomfortable with it and emphasized conventional spelling on all final copies of children's work. Anne followed and extended Dorothy's instructions for spelling, and consequently almost all of Darrell's writing for the year contained adult spellings above his inventive scribbling and writing.

Reading time for one November morning unfolded in the following way: It was 10:00 and all the children had just returned to the classroom from recess. They entered the room after putting their coats back on their racks in their cubbies. The teacher introduced the day's "center time" and explained that there were three centers for that day - "must do's:"

"First, "Most of you have prereading, when I call your group for reading..."

"Second, 'Second 'must do' is math..."

"'Third 'must do' is write in journal. You can write about anything you did for Halloween...It can be fantasy, pretend, or something real...""You can choose computers, puzzles.

Dorothy identified three children for the first reading group, "Darrell, Sarah, and Rachel will do reading. Other people will do journals." The two girls and Darrell sat on the rug with Dorothy. Each child had his/her own copy of Rosie's Walk. Dorothy began with a discussion of the illustration on the cover and asked the children to predict what they thought the story would be about. Dorothy made certain that each of the children received a turn to predict and Darrell received several tries. The directed reading activity developed in the following way:

Dorothy: Where is Rosie?

Darrell: Rosie is walking right there.

Anne: What kind of animal is she?

Darrell: Hen

Dorothy discussed the remainder of the book in a similar manner by emphasizing comprehension and giving each child many opportunities to participate. She finished her prereading discussion with, "What do you think will happen next?"

Dorothy read aloud, "Around the Pond"

Darrell reread, "Around the Pond" and pointed to it.

Dorothy asked, "What happens to the fox?"

Rachel: "Scared"

Dorothy: "Ok, turn the page"

"Next page, what do you think is going to happen to the fox?"

Dorothy: Where is Rosey going to walk next?

Dorothy: "What do you think will happen? (as each page of the book is turned).

During this exchange Darrell sat still, turned the pages of the book and chewed on the ribbed collar of his sweatshirt.

Dorothy asked the children, "What sound does fence start with?"

"fa/fa/fa/?"

One of the children answered but Darrell didn't understand the word "under" and "through". He said, "under the fence"

What do you think will happen?

Darrell: "he will hit his head."

Darrell turned to the last page of the book.

Dorothy said, "Darrell, can you find the word dinner on this page?"

Darrell successfully pointed to the word, perhaps because it began with the letter /d/, which contained the same beginning letter as his name.

After the group reading lesson Darrell returned to his chair in the front of the room where a little blond girl, Ashley, wrote for him. At one point Darrell suddenly became distracted and said, "Hey, that's mine!" (referring to another boy across from Darrell's desk) "You have your own Josh!" Evidently Josh

had taken one of Darrell's crayons. Darrell dictated to Ashley for several minutes, and both children appeared very engagged with his compostion that read like this:

"Dear Mommy

"Last night I bumped my eye. I went trick or treating. I lost my tooth."

Many times other children helped Darrell. In fact, the girls in the room, particularly Evelyn and Rachel, voluntarily assumed responsibility for his needs. He became very much aware of this and effectively used the girls to get the help he wanted. Sometimes their generosity and care became humorous because Darrell skillfully used the girls to share their rings, coats or special items they had brought to school. These behind the scenes interactions actually grew into a minor issue because Evelyn's parents feared she was spending too much off-task time with Darrell, and they asked that she be placed in a different class than he the next year.

The teacher assistant's role in first grade

Anne usually tutored Darrell in the classroom. However, her tutoring typically focused on the distinctive features and letter-to-sound associations of letters when the other children focused on comprehension and composition. For instance, during one observation, Anne directed Darrell to copy words she had printed on the chalkboard. As he copied each word she asked him to orally pronounce them. Then she pronounced the sounds associated with each letter and asked him to repeat them. The emphasis of her tutoring was frequently that way, but that instructional focus seemed problematic for two important reasons: 1) Darrell had not yet learned to segment oral language phonemically. Neither his writing or reading reflected an ability to segment language into phonemes. Analysis of his writing revealed scribbling with an occasional letter, usually "d", appearing in his text. In reading he used memory and book illustrations to read a text, but he was not yet attending to print. Consequently, Anne's emphasis on symbol-to-sound relationships was premature for his level of literacy development. 2) When Anne taught the basic skills of symbol to sound correspondence, his peers read and composed. While Darrell worked on letter sounds with Anne, the other children read and wrote texts for understanding - this differing literacy tasks represented a significant curricular modification which separated Darrell further from

his peers.

Summary of first grade

Darrell's first grade classroom lacked the supportive literacy environment that he received in his previous year at the school. Interactionally, the first grade teacher and teacher assistant did not permit children to drift far from adult-directed tasks. Consequently, because there was so much adult mediation of children's interaction, it became difficult for Darrell to establish his social independence in the classroom. We identified this close monitoring of his behaviors as "shadowing," and in our opinion, it was an ineffective management strategy for Darrell as well as for the other children.

Although a variety of good teaching strategies were observed, the teacher and her assistant conflicted in their models of literacy instruction. For the first half of the year Dorothy taught small group reading lessons where she emphasized comprehension, prediction and interpretation of story illustrations. However, when Anne tutored Darrell, she taught with a bottom-up model of reading emphasizing letter-to-sound correspondence. This skill model of reading appeared premature for Darrell's level of language awareness. At best it would have been difficult for him to learn the skills that were being taught because he was not developmentally ready for that kind of instruction.

Second Grade

Darrell's second grade teacher, Doris, had taught kindergarten at ATS for many years, and this was her third year in second grade. She played piano and guitar, prepared class musicals for parents and actively involved herself in curricular decisions made at the school. Doris possessed a wide knowledge of children's literature and ways to use it to teach the other subject areas. She taugth the language arts in a readers/writers workshop format for two hours each day and presented curricular topics thematically. Doris used literature throughout the day, even reading chapter books to teach social studies and the other subjects.

Cheryl served as Darrell's full-time teacher assistant for second grade. She previously acquired a teaching certificate and her position with Doris would eventually help her earn a classroom teaching position at ATS the following year. Cheryl sang, played guitar and eagerly participated in all teaching

activities with Doris. Like Melina in Darrell's kindergarten class, Cheryl sometimes functioned as the classroom teacher. Cheryl interacted with Darrell much like Melina did. That is, she interacted with all children and an observer to the classroom would not know that she was assigned for Darrell. The only times she separated Darrell from the other children occurred when Doris conducted lessons, particularly in math, that were well above his present ability; Cheryl would often work with math manipulatives during these times. When Doris conducted a group reading lesson which seemed developmentally inappropriate for him, Cheryl provided individual instruction. Cheryl's tutoring of Darrell typically consisted of story reading, repeated readings of familiar books and word pocket chart activities.

The second grade area comprised two rooms on the first floor of the upper building. The classroom contained children' desks positioned in the shape of a U with the opening facing the chalkboard at the front of the room. One outside wall consisted of a paneled room-length window that permitted light and color to enrich the classroom. Doris used an opposite corner as a learning center that she frequently changed; at one point it contained a tank with a lizard, and at another time it offered a magnet center for the children to experiment with metals and polarity.

Their other room was the meeting room, and that is where each day began with a morning meeting. This room contained an up-right piano, a listening center, a wall containing many books, a long rectangular work table and a cushioned chair. Children often used this meeting room for independent literacy activities.

Morning meeting and literacy activities

Typically children arrived at school before 9 am. As they entered the building several adults waited in the lobby , greeting and helping with the children's books and coats when needed. When the children entered the classroom Doris often greeted them; sometimes she used this time to change seating patterns. One occasion , for example, she gave each child a playing card as they entered the classroom; Doris later laughed and explained to the researcher that she fixed the cards to deliberately make sure the children sat with others whom they hadn't sat with before.

Although Darrell was always physically smaller than his peers, by second grade his size was much

more evident. His head came several inches below the shoulders of many of them. Because of his smaller size some of the girls in the class became somewhat protective of him, but the boys remained largely indifferent and treated him as an equal, even during play.

One morning, which was typical of many others, progressed in the following way: As children entered the classroom they resumed work on their "globe" project from the previous day. They selected magazines and cut-out pictures to attach to a collage they were assembling about the earth. At about 9:15 Doris announced that they should put their work away and come to morning meeting.

When morning meeting began, Darrell sat with his back against the wall on the edge of the entire group. He sat still and appeared preoccupied with the children around him, closely watching and sometimes touching them. He slowly inched into the middle of the group and playfully swatted at Ashley . She, in turn, affectionately grabbed his hand and squeezed it. Later he poked her, giving her a something he had found on the rug. Then he played a kind of patty-cake game with her.

Doris appeared aware of his behaviors but she continued to brainstorm with the children about the books they had read about Japan. Doris presented a unit on Japan each year. An outside speaker had visited the children the day before, and Doris now explained to them that she wanted everyone to write and thank him. Although Doris ignored Darrell's behavior during the brainstorming activity, when the children rose to go to their desks, she quietly reminded him, "Darrell I want you to do your very best."

After Darrell sat at his desk to write, Cheryl conferred with him. Realizing that he hadn't actively participated in the brainstorming, she brainstormed individually with him. Cheryl asked Darrell to draw what he remembered about what the visitor said. She asked him if he remembered the chopsticks, and salt and pepper. She gently placed her hands on his shoulder encouraging him to attend to the task. Cheryl only stayed with him a few minutes and then helped other children as they worked at their desks.

After a short time Doris walked over to Darrell. As he drew on his paper, she reminded him that she wanted him to do the very best job that he could. But he responded by saying, "It's too hard." Doris then brought him over to the side of the room containing a bulletin board with Polaroid photographs of the Japanese guest. They spent several minutes examining and discussing the pictures. Then Darrell

returned to his desk and began to quietly draw at his seat while other children wrote their letters. Sometimes other children got up and visited their brainstorming list in the other room and copied words from it. Several minutes later Doris returned to Darrell's desk and helped him compose a greeting to place above his drawing. The greeting read: "Dear Devon." Doris asked him if he would like to color his drawing, and he seemed to like this idea and went to the next room for colored markers. When he returned to color he closely watched the other children around him; this was a common characteristic of Darrell's because he usually observed what others did and sometimes commented verbally about them.

During readers & writers' workshop Darrell completed similar tasks and activities as the other children. He self-selected books and read silently . Darrell composed in his journal, took turns sharing his writing, presented book-talks and participated actively in classroom discussions. His social skills grew and he became even more adept at getting others to do things for him, prompting the need for Cheryl to monitor the situation closely. Sometimes Cheryl tutored him with predictable books and pocket word-charts containing vocabularly items from his reading.

Summary of Second Grade

Darrell's second grade offered a rich literacy environment for all children. His teacher assistant remained primarily in the background, helping all children as needed. Darrell participated fully in the readers and writers workshop. Doris and Cheryl involved him in most classroom activities, by providing him parallel tasks to what the other children completed: when his peers composed, he also wrote, albeit with scribbling, pre-phonemic spelling and illustrations. Like the other children, Darrell presented his favorite books and his writing during sharing time. Cheryl only separated him from the class when Doris presented lessons that were developmentally far above his level of performance, and this occurred more in math than any other subject. Second grade proved to be a happy and successful year for Darrell.

Discussion

Teachers and children at the Augusta Treadwell School benefited from Darrell's inclusion in their classrooms. Teachers developed a broader understanding about teaching and learning. They learned to successfully teach children who represented a wider range of literacy experiences and abilities than they

had ever been accustomed to. Darrell's presence helped his teachers think differently about their curriculum. And although it wasn't the case at ATS, all too frequently schools still hold rigid curricular expectations, regardless of their children's backgrounds and experiences. Schools today, particularly at the elementary level, must be challenged to assume responsibility for all children's learning, regardless of students' abilities, racial, ethnic, language and economic backgrounds. Darrell's inclusion in ATS offered its faculty the opportunity to think more positively about teaching children with underdeveloped literacy skills. We believe Darrell's presence helped improve teachers' thinking about teaching at his school.

Darrell's inclusion at ATS also helped the teachers think more sensitively about children's learning needs. His presence encouraged teachers to become more child-centered and less driven by previously developed curriculum. Teachers' sensitivity toward children's abilities is an increasingly important matter in a diverse and multicultural society. All too often children and their families are blamed for not meeting the expectations of their schools; in our view, inclusion forces schools and teachers to think more sensitively and creatively about meeting all children's needs within regular education classrooms, regardless of family backgrounds.

Children also benefited from Darrell's presence in their classrooms. They learned to think about others as well as themselves. Darrell's peers learned to accept physical and academic differences as being part of normal everyday life. The children also learned to celebrate Darrell's personal accomplishments, even when his learning seemed so different from theirs. His classmates acquired a greater sense of community by recognizing that everyone has unique gifts and needs. Darrell's presence helped children develop a sense of social responsibility for others that would not have been obtained as easily without him. When all our children learn tolerance and acceptance of difference, we will be much closer to a just and equitable society.

Darrell's teacher assistants had a tremendous impact upon his inclusion that both accelerated and impeded his progress. We learned that teacher assistants should not foster dependency. Special needs children must learn to function independently in their inclusion classrooms. Two of Darrell's teacher assistants appeared particularly skillful at helping him learn to negotiate daily classroom activities, and a

visitor to their classrooms would not know, unless told, that the teacher assistant was assigned for Darrell. The effective teacher assistants remained very much in the background of classroom events and helped all children as needed. In contrast, Darrell's least effective teacher assistant "shadowed" him by providing continual social and instructional support that bred dependence upon her. The long term danger of this "shadowing" was that Darrell would become accustomed to adult mediation for his social and learning needs. In our view it is far better for special children to learn self-monitoring and self-correcting behaviors so that they become independent learners and, in the long term, self-sufficient adults in society.

Certain kinds of instruction fostered Darrell's successful inclusion - the more parallel his literacy tasks were to those of his peers the greater was his learning. This meant that when other children silently read, Darrell did the same. Similarly, when his peers composed, he would also compose but by using illustrations, scribbling and inventive spelling. When the teachers, as his second grade teacher did, required children to prepare a report about penguins for their thematic unit of study, Darrell studied illustrated books, listened to audio tapes of books, watched videotapes about penguins, read with other children in his room, and illustrated and dictated his report to his teacher assistant. However, during first grade his literacy tasks often consisted of low level copying, tracing, and sounding-out activities instead of the composing and comprehending tasks that his peers performed.

Sadly, we have also learned that special children can be as socially and academically isolated in a regular classroom as they are when in separate facilities or programs. We found that not all regular classroom teachers willingly assume academic and social responsibility for children in their rooms. Teachers need to learn how to effectively modify their instruction and interaction to accommodate all children in their classrooms. Children with disabilities who are in a regular classroom can still remain socially and academically isolated from their peers when their teachers and assistants offer curriculum and instruction that marks them as completely different from others. During Darrell's three years of regular education, one teacher did not know how to accommodate his academic and social needs; in effect her methods of teaching and social interaction with him became so different from what she provided his peers, that the unintended effect was to socially segregate him and impede his learning.

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